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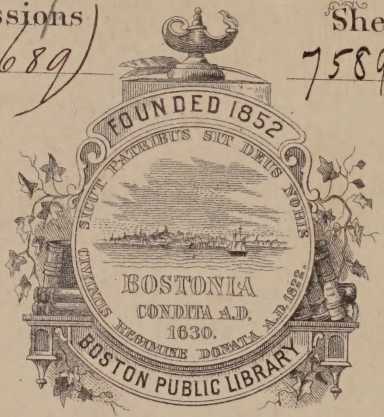

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A PLAN FOR TEMPERANCE WORK,

OR

The Church Temperance Society

FROM AN

UNITARIAN POINT OF VIEW.

BEING A PAPER READ BEFORE THE UNITARIAN MINISTERS' MONDAY CLUB, APRIL 13, 1885,

BY THE

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A PLAN FOR TEMPERANCE WORK.

So much has been said upon the subject of Temperance, and the subject has been so recently before you for discussion, that I would have hesitated a good while to say anything here upon what may seem to some a worn-out subject, had I not known that instead of being a worn-out subject it is one which can bear and indeed demands new and continuing consideration on our part. Yet, knowing that, I would perhaps have hesitated, had I not a definite proposition to make, looking towards some specific and beneficial results.

I.

I do not know whether I had better spend any time in urging the importance of temperance work. You know the facts and the statistics which make this subject of such vital interest to every worker for the Kingdom of God. Yet it may not be without its good result to repeat here the figures and facts I have at hand, as a sort of introduction, just to set the blood of indignation flowing and to cause the cry to escape once more from our lips "What can we do?" and the prayer "God help us to do something." Moreover, it is only by constant repetition and long consideration that the meaning of statements familiar enough in themselves comes in in its full height and depth to the mind.

The following statement applies to England, and was made in the year 1868 by the Belgian Minister of Instruction in a report to the Belgian Chambers of Representatives.

"The drink results for England are:—

1. Nine-tenths of the paupers (of whom in 1881 there were three millions and a half).
2. Three-fourths of the criminals.
3. One-half the diseases.
4. Three-fourths of the depravity of children and young people.
5. One-third of the insanity.
6. One-third of the shipwrecks."

In the city of Glasgow, in 1883, 52,827 of the population were before a police magistrate. "Of that number 40,537 were charged with drunkenness, simple assaults, etc., and again of that number 14,366 were dragged from the gutters and gathered from the streets drunk and incapable. They had thus 1 out of every 40 of the population drunk and incapable; 1 out of every 15 charged with drunkenness and assaults; 1 out of every 11 before a police magistrate. Such was the condition of the Western Metropolis, whose motto is, 'Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word.' It was right to observe that numbers of these were recommitments, but when they considered the large number of drunken persons who never fell into the hands of the police, it did not materially alter the case."

The annual drink bill of England is £136,000,000 or $680,000,000. The English statistician, Mr. William Hoyle, estimates the economic loss to the nation through drink at £220,000,000 or $1,100,000,000, and the same writer says that to manufacture the yearly supply of intoxicating liquor 80,000,000 bushels of grain or its equivalent is destroyed.

"One in every eight of the population of rich and prosperous England dies a pauper." Foundation of Death, p. 239.

Dr. Norman Kerr (1879) says: "When asked to present the final results of my investigation to the last Social Science Congress, I was compelled to admit that at least 120,000 of our population annually lost their lives through alcoholic excess, 40,500 dying from their own intemperance, and 79,500 from accident, violence, poverty or disease arising from the intemperance of others." What a story such figures tell! and yet figures tell so little. I have been reading recently, accounts of the poverty and degradation to be found in London and

other English cities. The picture presented is frightful, heartrending, beyond anything I ever conceived. It is, indeed, the "Bitter Cry" from a people sunk so low, so lost to every sense of decency and right, so buried by the weight of poverty, crime, disease, as scarcely to be recognized as part of the human race. No one denies that such results are due in some such proportion as the figures I have given indicate, to what the English workman calls "the drink."

Are things better in America? Yes, immeasurably better. But our country is new, and by reason of that fact and the facts that go with it, the terrible condition of the English poor has not come yet to us. The causes are at work however which may produce similar results, as the figures will prove.

For the year ending April 30,1884, $71,655,211.33 was the tax collected for rectified spirits in the United States, representing 79,616,901 gallons. Of beer, 588,957,189 gallons were manufactured during the same time.

The increase in rectified spirits since 1878, six years, is from 57 to 79 millions; and of beer, from 310 to 589 millions. The beer retailed at 5 cents a half pint, and the spirits at 10 cents a gill, amounts to $715,939,834 as the drinkbill of the United States, not including wines and imported liquors.

So that from $700,000,000 to $800,000,000, some say $900,000,000, is yearly spent by our people for "the drink."

It is not difficult to believe this when we learn that in New York city there are 12,000 licensed saloons, whose receipts, says Dr. Howard Crosby, are $60,000,000; that in Chicago there are 3,777 licensed saloons, 1 to every 35 families; and in Boston 2,800 licenses are issued, and where it is said 1,300 unlicensed liquor-shops can be counted—when we know from the census of 1880 that there were 195,000 liquor dealers in the United States in that year.

Moreover, there are not wanting facts as to crime and poverty, the results of this enormous traffic.

The Grand Jury of Philadelphia lately used the following language in a report:—"In the performance of our duty we have been deeply impressed with the fact that four fifths, if not nine tenths, of the 6,000 paupers and criminals which fill our public institutions, are in

their present sad and deplorable condition through the influence of intoxicating liquors. If we look beyond these institutions to determine the cost of the liquor traffic to this city; if we estimate the increase of the police force necessary to meet its requirements, the degradation emanating from the infamous pest-houses which it sustains, the idleness which it fosters, the wealth which it squanders and destroys, the poverty and disgrace which it entails, the burdens and expenses which it lays upon our courts of justice; and if we add to these the perpetual support of so large a number of paupers and criminals,—the loss which we suffer is incalculable."

Other facts I find. The number of arrests in Massachusetts the last year was 64,239 persons, of whom 48,876 were sentenced.

"Of these arrests 33,961 were for drunkenness alone, of whom 17,854 were committed because of their inability to pay a fine of $1 and costs." "Forty per cent were under twenty-five years of age, and twenty-five per cent of them were less than 21 years old."

In the city of Boston alone there were 31,200 arrests, 19,070 the direct results of liquor, or 1 to every 19 inhabitants. Five liquor licenses for each school, and 12 for each church.

But enough of these bewildering, terrifying figures. They tell such a story that the mind can scarcely realize its meaning—a story of which no one appreciates the meaning until he thinks of what misery *one* man may bring to his fellows and multiplies this by thousands and ten thousands, until the sum total of poverty and crime and disease is complete.

I remember a boy some ten or fifteen years ago of whom at the time it was said "he is getting into wild ways." Only a day or two ago I heard that his ways were ended. Scarce thirty years of age, he had literally drank himself to death, leaving a wife and child and, fortunately, several million dollars. It is said that he first led away another whom I also remember—who, while too weak to resist temptation, had a conscience—and who in a moment of disgrace and despair ended his own life.

Can we hesitate to say, then, that of all the social problems of our day none is of more vital importance to our people than this question of intoxicating drink?

II.

Now comes the practical question, "What can we *do* about it?"

Notice that question. It isn't, what can our *legislators* do about it? It isn't, what can Boston or Cambridge do about it? It isn't, what can the Baptist or the Orthodox denominations do about it? I mean simply, what can *we*, Unitarians, Unitarian ministers, in our parishes, larger or smaller, in towns or cities, do about it?

I shall answer simply by telling you what I have been trying to do the past few months,—not because I have accomplished a great deal, but because I believe what I have been trying to do points the way, or rather one way.

I have done nothing original. I simply made this proposition to my congregation, that all who were sufficiently interested to do so should form themselves into a Temperance Union for the sole purpose of doing what each and all together could to push forward the good work. I used these words,—"I feel that I, as the minister of this church, am not doing as much as I ought to be doing for the promotion of the temperance cause, and I feel that this church as a church is not doing what ought to be done,—while there is scarcely any question of equal importance, none perhaps which should be nearer the heart and oftener in the mind."

Not only this: I said then what I must say here, that the whole Unitarian Church is sadly delinquent in this respect.

True, there are many individuals who are heartily in sympathy with the cause of temperance, who are working efficiently and with good results. There are many who do not hesitate, as I do not hesitate, to declare themselves by practice and speech in favor of total abstinence: and there are others who, if not in this way, in some other way, make their influence felt.

But I am sorry to say, that as a whole, our churches have not been very deeply interested in this matter,—have let it go on in the hands of other people and other churches, content if the minister now and then made passing reference to it, or freed his own mind by a sermon once or twice a year.

I called attention to one thing, which when it took

place seemed to promise a decided movement in the right direction.

At the last Saratoga Conference, for the first time, there was a meeting held to consider the subject of temperance, as we well remember, and several of our ministers spoke with the earnestness which the subject demands.

At that meeting, resolutions were prepared and adopted, and while it cannot be supposed that all agreed with them fully, it was evident that a large number did.

These resolutions were as follows:

"*Resolved*, That under all the conditions of modern society we believe that nothing short of a total disuse of intoxicating beverages can serve as a sure means of abolishing and preventing the evils and miseries of intemperance.

"*Resolved*, That since it is agreed on all sides that such beverages form no part of a necessary diet for men and women in health, we affectionately call on all those who may regard their moderate use as innocent to give up such use out of compassion for their weaker brethren.

"*Resolved*, That the magnitude of the aforesaid evils, and the fact that they affect injuriously all social and public as well as private interests, make it imperative that society should step to the utmost verge of its power in the employment of well-considered legislation for the suppression of the traffic in such beverages.

"*Resolved*, That in the interests of humanity and for the honor of religion we hold it incumbent upon our ministers and churches to bear a positive and unequivocal testimony against the sale and use of intoxicating drinks.

"*Resolved*, That since the complete triumph of temperance principles must rest on sound reason and improved education, we heartily rejoice in the passage by New York, Michigan, and other States, of laws requiring that the physiological effects of alcohol shall be made a part of common-school education."

It seemed like the beginning of a strong Unitarian Temperance movement which might some day unite all our churches by their ministers and many of the members at least in one common work. And yet, when the Saratoga Conference had ended, ministers and people returned to their homes, and our work went on in the old usual way. I heard of no further action on the part of any church. I was sure that my own church had done nothing to strengthen itself in temperance principles, or to exert whatever strength it had. I felt that in this way we might go on indefinitely. Now and then I would speak to my congregation upon the sub-

ject. Some of them would be interested in other ways. Many of them would, perhaps, be doing their individual part successfully and well. But as a church, our influence would be nothing, our strength would be divided, and on this greatest of questions we should be silent.

I determined therefore to unite the men and women of my parish, so far as I could, in a union for the expression and the strengthening of the temperance sentiment.

As I say, I have done nothing original. I thought the matter over carefully; I had a talk with one of the best temperance workers in this city, Rev. Edw. Osborne, of the Church of St. John Evangelist, and received from him a full account of the Church Temperance Society, and I adopted the ideas (substantially) which lie at the basis of this. I was particularly anxious to avoid the objectionable features of temperance societies, their one-sidedness, fanaticism, unpractical character, and on the other hand I hoped for something reasonably definite in its purpose, something which would "mean business" and by its very existence would speak a wise and useful word.

I proposed the following as the basis of union:

ART. I. The name of the association shall be "The First Parish Temperance Union."

ART. II. The purpose of this Union shall be to work for the cause of temperance in whatever ways may seem to it wise and right; to study the social problems of poverty, crime and disease in their relation to the use of intoxicating drink, and to diffuse whatever knowledge may be gained; to discuss methods of temperance reform; to devise and so far as possible to execute plans for practical reform, such as coffee-rooms, reading-rooms and the like; to exert, by its meetings and by its membership, such influence for good as by the grace of God it may possess.

ART. III. Recognizing the fact that among thoroughly interested and conscientious persons there are wide differences of opinion as to what rule of personal practice and example is the wisest, and believing that it is possible for such persons to work together in the spirit of Christ, not judging one another, the following declarations of purpose, two in number, are presented, and whoever, being sixteen years old or over, signs either one of them, becomes a member, in full standing, of this Union.

DECLARATION A.

I recognize my duty to exert myself for the suppression of intemperance, and as a member of The First Parish Temperance Union, will endeavor, by example and precept, to promote its

objects; and in furtherance of this, I hereby agree to abstain from all intoxicating drinks as beverages.

This pledge of total abstinence is to bind only so long as I retain my card of membership in this society.

DECLARATION B.

I recognize my duty to be always temperate myself, and to do what I can to keep others from intemperance. Without binding myself to total abstinence, I engage, as a member of this Union, to be watchful of the influence of my example over others, and to discourage, in all ways that commend themselves to my judgment and my conscience, such drinking usages as are plainly at variance with the interest of good morals. This engagement is to bind only so long as I retain my card of membership in this society.

You will see that the basis of such a Union is the co-operation, on perfectly friendly and equal terms, of those who accept total abstinence as the best rule, and those who cannot go quite so far, but who are ready to do all that commends itself to their judgment. Another feature you will notice is, that whenever the card of membership is returned to the Society, the declaration is no longer binding, which allows for any deliberate change of purpose.

The motto of such a union might be Paul's words, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," and the spirit upon which it rests is the spirit of Christ.

I present it to you for your consideration.

III.

Now, a few words as to the working of my experiment. Nothing remarkable, but with fair success and hopes for the future.

Eighty-six persons, representing all the different parts of my parish, came to my call upon that Sunday evening and by a unanimous vote accepted my proposition.

Cards of membership were printed, and at present we have about one hundred and ten members, young and old, none under sixteen years of age. A juvenile branch is one of our plans for next winter.

We have met some slight objections to the signing of cards of membership, which was to be expected. We feel however that in these declarations of purpose lies our strength, at least I feel it to be so, since the objectionable features of pledges do not exist in them. Moreover, all meetings are open to all persons, members or not.

It may be interesting to say that about three-fourths of the members preferred to join by signing the Declaration A, Total Abstinence; while a number of the most active members come in under "B."

We are regularly organized with President and the usual officers, and an Executive Committee, which, with limited powers, manages the affairs of the union.

What have we done? Very little as yet, except *to be*, which is perhaps the chief result to be desired and will continue to be the chief result. We are the temperance voice in our church, speaking and declaring a purpose. We have held several meetings during the winter for discussion, and exceedingly profitable meetings they have been, well attended, quietly and earnestly conducted, giving much practical information and wise suggestion.

To illustrate what we look forward to—other than the silent influence we can exert and the deepening of knowledge and purpose—I will say that the next meeting will discuss the question, "What can we do in Dorchester to diminish the number of saloons and check the open violation of the laws?"

Before closing, I will call your attention to a few facts in regard to the Episcopal Church Temperance Society in England and America, upon which my little experiment has been very largely modelled.

The Church Temperance Society was begun in England in 1873—"Temperance as the law of the gospel, and total abstinence as a rule of expediency in certain cases; union and co-operation on equal terms of all temperate people." In 1882 the report was: thirteen clerical and ten lay secretaries engaged in promoting the work by sermons, conferences, meetings, etc. "Returns from twenty-five dioceses give 339,687 members (160,000 juvenile); in the seamen's branch, 14,354 members. The number in the army branch not given. Rescue work, juvenile work, branches in training colleges, among railway men, women and servants, etc.; work for better social customs, coffee-houses, etc. etc. Instead of 1000 total abstaining clergymen, as nine years ago, there are over 4000."

In America the idea was adopted in 1881. I have very imperfect reports of its success. In Massachusetts the society is slowly making its way. There are 14 branches with 757 members, to which are to be added about 110 diocesan members.

The plan has received the personal sanction of 54 bishops, and the methods of the society have been endorsed by 31 dioceses. Meetings have been held in a great many places, addressed by the Secretary, Robert Graham, and by the various leaders in this work. The report says, "Through many discouragements and much lukewarmness we have persevered." The New York Society has done excellent work in the direction of high license and the enforcement of the liquor laws.

As examples of success in parish work, these instances are cited:—St. John the Evangelist, Boston, 160 adult and 100 juvenile members; Episcopal Hospital Mission, Philadelphia, 160 adult and 124 juvenile; Parish Society of the late Dean of Montreal, 1,100 members, owning and running a coffee house; and in Ontario, Canada, 50 Parochial Societies, 5,200 members.

With this I close, only saying that if we Unitarians are to keep our places in the front rank of Christian workmen, if the liberal faith is to continue a working faith in the mighty problems of reform, we cannot afford to forget this matter of temperance.

In some way, we must take hold of it, and more firmly, wisely, persistently than we have as yet done. I cannot help thinking that if in each one of our parishes, societies, somewhat after the model I have suggested, were formed, even if there were no central organization, something, possibly a great deal, might be accomplished.

I believe we may say of ourselves, as the rector of St. Luke's, Germantown, Pa., said not long ago of the Episcopal Church: "We have the prestige of position, of intelligence and of wealth. Our influence, our example, must tell. If we are to be the church of the people, we must understand the people's needs; we must try to meet the people's wants; we must fight the people's foes. The public don't care a great deal for family descent, be it even apostolical; it asks, 'What can you do? What will you do?' Grit, vigor, earnestness, readiness to meet the emergency, a cool head and a brave heart, these command respect and a following. And every parish that expects to be recognized as an integral part of a true church, must, in view of the peril that threatens our church, our nation, our people, organize its members and utilize its resources to battle with the demon of strong drink."

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